

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of History  
REPORT**

**Killinarden Community School  
Killinarden, Tallaght, Dublin 24  
Roll number: 91337B**

**Date of inspection: 28 February 2012**



**A N R O I N N | D E P A R T M E N T O F  
O I D E A C H A I S | E D U C A T I O N  
A G U S S C I L E A N N A | A N D S K I L L S**

**REPORT  
ON  
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN HISTORY**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Date(s) of inspection</b>	27-28 February 2012
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during eight class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good to very good in the lessons observed.
- A variety of methodologies were incorporated into the planned development of the lessons to support student learning.
- There is good whole-school support and provision for History.
- The history teachers collaborate well in supporting the development of the teaching and study of History in the school.
- Good records of students' attendance and academic progress are maintained by both management and the history teachers.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Greater use should be made of differentiated written assignments as a means of supporting learning.
- The timetabled distribution of the weekly history lesson periods for the current fifth year history class group needs to be reviewed and, where practicable, the timetabling of a majority of a class group's history lesson periods in the afternoon should be avoided.
- The history department's subject plan should be further developed and the agreed coursework plans should include a section outlining the teaching and learning methodologies selected in respect of each topic.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Killinarden Community School is a co-educational secondary school with 459 students. The curricular programmes provided by the school are the Junior Certificate, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme. Transition Year (TY) is not offered. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) action plan.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The overall quality of the teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good to very good.
- The teachers quickly engaged their students at the outset by informing them of the focus of the lesson. However, the intended learning outcomes could have been more clearly identified in some lessons.
- Differentiated teaching and learning were integrated into the planned development of the lessons mainly through interaction with the students, the use of visual resources and the teachers' support for individual students when completing a written task. With regard to the latter, it is recommended that more widespread use be made of the setting of differentiated written tasks.
- The teachers' interactive techniques included exposition, and the addressing of questions to named students and globally to the class. The students' engagement and learning was supported well by these means. There was scope in some lessons however, to make greater use of targeted questions in order to involve all students and in one lesson a brainstorming activity merited consideration in the preparation of a homework assignment.
- There was good use made of a range of resources such as information and communication technology (ICT), the board, the textbook and prepared handouts to enhance students' study and knowledge of their lesson topic. Notwithstanding the efficacy of the wide range of visual stimuli that was incorporated into the lessons overall, some lessons would have benefited from the display of additional images relating to the lesson topic.
- The development of students' literacy skills was inherent in the opportunities that were provided for them to answer questions orally, to read and to complete written assignments. In some lessons there was also a very clear emphasis placed on key words that were relevant to the lesson topic and this practice should be more widely adopted.
- Homework is frequently set and corrected. The provision of written formative comments on the students' homework assignments is commended. The scope to increase the teachers' usage of such comments as a means of supporting student learning should be further explored.
- The teachers remain closely informed about their students' progress through noting their attendance, application to their coursework and examination results.

## **SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- Accessibility to History is good. Most junior cycle students study History as a core subject of their Junior Certificate programme. A minority, who have been identified as having additional educational needs, follow the JCSP and study Environmental and Social Studies (ESS) which includes some history coursework. History is provided as an optional subject choice for students pursuing the established Leaving Certificate. A combination of banding and streaming is used to organise the junior cycle class groups because it is deemed more appropriate than the formation of all mixed-ability classes in meeting the students' needs.
- The six members of the history team are all deployed to teach History and continuity is maintained, where practicable, with the class group to which the teacher is assigned until the students complete their curricular programme. These good practices enable the teachers to get to know their students well and to remain actively involved in teaching the subject.
- History is well resourced. For example, the teachers have their own base classrooms that are equipped with ICT, a designated resource room, and a shared electronic folder.
- Management supports the collaborative work of the history teachers and their continuing professional development. Whole-school policies on assessment and homework have been formulated to support teaching and learning. The history department is also provided with an annual budget.
- Management systematically records the students' academic achievements in their formal school and certificate examinations and compares the students' results in the latter examinations with national norms. Management uses this information to affirm and to encourage subject department planning.
- The timetabled provision of four history lesson periods per week for the designated junior cycle history class groups and five periods per week for the senior cycle history class groups is supportive of the subject. It is recommended, however, that the five periods for the current fifth year history class, which have been timetabled on two days, be more widely distributed throughout the week. It is also recommended that the timetabling of the majority of a class's weekly history lessons in afternoon time slots such as has occurred for a number of junior cycle class groups be avoided whenever possible.

## **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The history teachers collaborate formally and informally in supporting the development of the subject in the school. The position of history department co-ordinator is rotated, formal meetings are convened at regular intervals and the business of the meetings is recorded.
- The history department's subject plan also attests to the good collaborative work of the history teachers and the good standard of planning that underpins the teaching and study of History in the school. By way of supporting the ongoing development of the plan, it is recommended that additional sections be provided on the agreed responsibilities of the history co-ordinator, the analysis of the students' certificate examination results, and a strategic development plan for History in the years ahead. The work of the history

department in developing the literacy and numeracy skills of the students should also be elaborated on in the appropriate section of the plan.

- The teachers' agreed annual coursework plans reflect the commitment of the history teachers to teaching their students well. It is however, recommended that a section on methodologies be included in the coursework plans and that the teaching and learning methodologies that are utilised to teach each topic be indicated therein.
  - In keeping with good teaching practice, the planning of the lessons observed ensured that each lesson had a definite focus, a structured development and prepared supplementary resources to support student learning.
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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.